DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 356 194 SP 034 375

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TITLE A Critical Social Perspective on Serving Today's Children and Youth: The Experience of a Consortium of Liberal Arts Colleges. A Symposium Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (San Diego, California, February 24-27, 1993).
PUB DATE Feb 93
NOTE 39p.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Computer Uses in Education; Critical Thinking; *Curriculum Development; Educational Change; Educational Responsibility; Educational Technology; Elementary Secondary Education; Equal Education; *Ethics; Higher Education; *Intercollegiate Cooperation; Learning; *Liberal Arts; Political Influences; Preservice Teacher Education; Social Influences; *Social Responsibility; *Teacher Responsibility; Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS Clarke College IA; Loras College IA; University of Dubuque IA

ABSTRACT

This symposium presentation comprises five papers about the efforts of a consortium of three Iowa liberal arts colleges (Clarke College, Loras College, and the University of Dubuque) to develop a critical social perspective in its teacher preparation curriculum. An introduction by Michael Vavrus defines critical social perspective as a critical examination of the interaction between the school and its sociopolitical environment. "The Role of Teacher" (James A. Allan) outlines three challenges in teacher education: to enable future teachers to discover the necessity for change in schools, to help future teachers own a sense of ethical responsibility, and to help them know how to act on ethical concerns. "Meaning and Learning" (Bernard R. Dansart) presents the nature of the learner as supported by three axioms or pillars (freedom of will, will to meaning, and meaning of life) and discusses the importance of educating for meaning, because the discovery of meaning might be considered the distinguishing characteristic of human beings. "Part of the Road" (Bonnie von Hoff Johnson) discusses the disparity in the availability of technology in schools, reports on a survey of Iowa teachers concerning their use of technology, and admonishes teacher preparation programs to use computer technology and encourage prospective teachers to address school inequalities. A conclusion, titled "Working with Colleagues in the Development of a Critical Social Perspective: A Department Chair's Experience" (Michael Vavrus), comments on the process of model building and course evaluation. Two appendices conclude the document: "Orienting Questions for the Critical Social Perspective" and "Faculty Self-Evaluation of Courses Form." (JDD)

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by

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Tri-College Cooperative Effort

James Allan, Presenter
Loras College

Bernard Dansart, Presenter
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Pacific Luthern University

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Table of Contents

"Introduction" by Michael Vavrus 1

"The Role of Teacher" by James A. Allan 4

"Meaning and Learning"by Bernard R. Dansart 10

"Part Of The Road" by Bonnie von Hoff Johnson 18

"Working with Colleagues in the Development of Critical Social Perspective:A Department Chair's Experience" by Michael Vavrus.....25

Appendix A: Orienting Questions for the Critical Social Perspective.....31

Appendix B: Faculty Self-Evaluation of Courses Form.....33

A Critical Social Perspective on Serving Today's Children and Youth: The Experience of a Consortium of Liberal Arts Colleges

Introduction

by Michael Vavrus

A consortium of three liberal arts colleges -- Clarke College, Loras College, and the University of Dubuque -- has expanded its traditional conceptions of teacher preparation by experimenting with the inclusion of a critical theoretical orientation throughout the professional education curriculum (see Beyer & Zeichner, 1987; Valli, 1992).[1] The education faculty within the consortium have affirmed that "our mission is to prepare graduates who reflect deeply from a critical social perspective and make ethical decisions on issues vital to students, the profession, and society."[2] We -- four education faculty members -- will be describing the curriculum development process and outcomes of the consortium in its efforts toward programs[3] critically responsive to the needs of children and youth through curricular examples as well as an overview of consensus building actions undertaken by the education faculty.

The faculty defined a teacher education curriculum addressing issues from a critical social perspective as one that

> "takes into consideration the interaction between the school and the socio-political environment in which it exists. This perspective requires a critical approach to looking at the existing environment. Reflective teachers thoughtfully question *status quo* arrangements and consider alternative visions and actions. Reflective teachers affirm as essential an awareness of a critical social perspective on all professional decision making."

By means of describing early experiences with this approach, we seek to engage you, the audience, in reflection and eventual dialogue on the applications and implications of a critical position within teacher education for today's children and youth.

The critical social perspective is one of three elements or foci defining our department's curriculum model "Teacher as Reflective Decision Maker." The other two components are the more traditional emphases of teacher preparation programs:

Pedagogical Knowledge and Teaching Technique. We hold a view of teaching which foresees teachers who have significant control over their work through the application of pedagogical knowledge to teaching technique and have also developed an overall sense of critical social responsibility to their profession. As a faculty we understand that such decision making has a critical social perspective which questions standard assumptions about schooling and teaching practice.[4]

Our purpose today is to share our working experience with the critical social perspective. Within the discourse on reflective teacher education curricula -- which suggests a growing receptiveness for more complex conceptualization of teacher reflection (Valli, 1992) -- the actions of our faculty, nevertheless, may still be understood as a disjunction with the past and not necessarily as a positivist, natural continuum in the history of teacher education.[5] Despite the extensive literature and rhetoric on school reform and restructuring, a "good" teacher is still evaluated on his or her teaching ability. In such a context teaching competence tends to be understood as the best *technical* means to unexamined ends -- whether it be by a sophisticated portfolio review or a simple Likert rating scale.

Teacher education and the schooling process have historically served as key social regulation agencies. That is to say, curriculum goals and outcomes are generally defined as narrow outgrowths of the wants of the marketplace rather than on a conception of the needs of children and youth. However, we find an education faculty in traditional liberal arts settings -- two colleges affiliated with the Catholic church and a third with a Presbyterian heritage -- who have agreed that their curriculum ought to encourage a kind of reflective decision making for going beyond technical and social control affirmations. As Valli (1992) observes, only at the critical reflective level are the "social and political implications of teaching central to the reflective preparation of teachers" (p. 219).

Notes

[1]Beyer & Zeichner (1987) and Valli (1992) discuss the lack of inclusion of a critical social perspective throughout practitioner preparation programs.

[2]All direct statements in this section attributed to the entire Education faculty are taken from accreditation reports and the department's *Teacher Education Handbook*, 1992, Dubuque, IA: Tri-College Cooperative Effort.

[3] Programs include elementary education, early childhood, special education, and secondary education, totaling approximately 100 graduates annually.

[4]Feiman-Nemser's (1990) observation that concepts of reflective teaching are differentiated by their goals and foci led us to the development of distinctly defined elements within our model. The discussion by Barnes (1989) on "deliberative action" (p. 19) helped us bridge our model from the generalist Schön (1987) to the field of teacher education. Apple (1988) and Valli (1990; 1992) along with the Barnes review emphasized to us that we needed to include in the conceptualization of our subcategories of reflection not only an emphases on pedagogical knowledge and teaching technique but also a social critical perspective toward the world of schooling.

[5]Popkewitz (1991) notes that the study of the structure of a curriculum embodies "a set of assumptions or principles by which social events become defined or opposition is expressed" (p. 21). Furthermore, Popkewitz explains, "Changing boundaries and points of interaction among institutions and social systems define structural patterns. Perceiving structural patterns as sets of relations that are not linear but have breaks with the past provides the criteria for studying change. The focus on *structured relations* that pattern the events of schooling can be considered in the single word *curriculum*" (p. 22).

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The Role of Teacher

by James A. Allan

An Ethical Dimension of Teacher Education

In 1986, the Carnegie Forum argued a plan to "seize the opportunity" in meeting the twin crises of quality and equity in schooling that arguably threatened our national welfare. Forecasting a "window of opportunity" to become "a nation prepared," the report described how increasing retirees from an aging teaching force, coupled with increasing student populations would, in the near future, require increasing numbers of teachers in the nation's schools (Carnegie Forum, 1986). The report argued that a looming teacher shortage could be transformed into opportunity by increasing both standards and incentives into the profession -- particularly transformations in conditions of teachers' work -- in order to attract and retain large numbers of candidates intellectually qualified and ethically committed to solving the problems of educational quality and equity in our nation's schools. In addition, the report implied, a large influx of a new kind of teacher would provide the critical mass in our teaching workforce necessary for institutional change.

1986 was remarkable not only for the Carnegie Forum's focus on "Teachers for the Twenty-first Century," as key to school reform as a means to national security, but also for a shift in a national consensus on reform strategies (Murphy, 1990, 1991). 1986 marked the beginning of a shift from "first wave" reform strategy, state-mandated top-down school "improvement" schemes, to "second wave" decentralized local strategies for radical "reinvention" of schools.

The two "waves of reform" entail contradictory definitions of the teacher's role. In the first wave "improvement" strategy, teachers typically were seen as a part of the problem: insufficiently skilled and recalcitrant, in need of increased technical expertise, delivered from above under more exacting supervision and control. In the second wave "reinvention" or "restructuring" strategy, teachers are an essential part of the solution: gifted with the wisdom of practice, motivated by ethical concern and caring for children, in

need of "voices," increased professional autonomy and respect, and collegial empowerment.

While a consensus appears to be emerging among educational policy-makers in favor of "restructuring" schools (Murphy, 1991), the districts, and actual workplaces where our graduates are employed differ widely in their definitions of and commitment to either "improvement" or "restructuring" strategies.

Consequently, those of us charged with preparing teachers for their roles in schools have become aware of our own dilemma. Given this awareness of the socio-political environment in which our teacher education programs exist, must we not prepare teachers both with the technical skill and understanding to function in "schools-as-they-have-been," and also with the critical perspectives that question present practices and foundational assumptions, enabling our graduates to envision and participate in change: "the schools-to-come" (Barnes, 1989).

Yet as recently as 1990, John Goodlad's survey of teacher education programs revealed that the overwhelming majority of student teachers and education faculty saw themselves as participants only in school "improvement," fine-tuning instrumental competencies in order to fit into and perpetuate traditional notions of the school. Only five percent of respondents saw themselves as agents of change when questioned about the role of teacher in schools (Goodlad, 1990). Goodlad spoke to the moral dimensions of educating future teachers, as he observed elsewhere that as we restructure authority and policy-making in schools, it is clearly irresponsible to significantly expand teachers' authority, without educating them to use it well (Goodlad, 1990a).

Students' Responses

The reality of change and the need to prepare themselves to participate in it are difficult and even painful discoveries for many future teachers. They are unsettled when "one best way" notions of instructional strategy and school organization are demonstrated to be actual obstacles rather than means to achieve legitimate school goals (Darling-

Hammond, 1990). They are alarmed to discover the power that rests in teachers' decision-making, the "weight of moral responsibility in an age of uncertainty" (Feinberg, 1990). They are confused by the real dilemmas facing teachers in the late 20th century, particularly those who are both caring and conscious. They are hesitant and uncertain how to translate the deep altruism that brings many of them to the profession into *personal* ethical responsibility. They typically prefer, I think, the illusion that science and authority have or will provide them the one best answer to all questions of teacher practice (narrowly construed), and further that this work is merely instrumental, that decision-making is the purview of higher-ups, and that teaching is simply a skilled and friendly sort of following orders. If Goodlad's figures are correct, this unrealistic but widely-held "ed school" definition of the teacher role should not be surprising. It may, in fact, underpin an equally widely held belief that teacher education does not address the *real* issues and essentials of the occupation, which can only be learned through experience.

Students often respond by denying the reality of change in schools, resisting both enlarged definitions of teaching responsibility and also attempts to help them use it well. This again makes sense, since schools-as-they-have-been have presumably worked relatively well for this self-selected group, and for their parents, who often enough, as successful educators themselves and role models, are convinced of the rightness of traditional divisions of labor and organizational models of schooling. In addition, field experiences during their education coursework often introduce students to sites -- presumaby normative -- still untouched by change or focused on superficial reform, or more significantly, to "model" teachers who are powerful and highly skilled technicians, but cynical or resistant to added burdens of leadership and the uncertainty of "reinvention" in a context of increased accountability.

Teacher educators convinced of the rightness of reinventing schools are ethically challenged to prepare students for rewarding, sustainable, and effective work in schools, and likewise committed to helping students discover and eliminate traditional school

practices that waste lives and public resources while perpetuating social inequality and injustice.

Reinventing the Teacher Role: Three Challenges

What is required in teacher education that meets the needs of teachers for the twenty-first century? Clearly, teachers must be educated to perceive how ethical practice devolves, in part, from responses to the question: "What are schools for?" (Goodlad, 1990a). Clearly, teachers need to acknowledge and value as a source of strength a fundamental caring responsibility to their students. In addition, teacher education, guided by an ethic of social justice, should center around critical inquiry and reflection on schools as social institutions revealed under the lenses of history, sociology, economics, and philosophy (Valli, 1990). As Emile Durkheim (1977), the founder of education as a discipline in French higher education wrote, at a time of similar social transformation:

> Good teachers will be aware of the legitimate needs of their society, and to gain this awareness they will need to study how these needs have evolved in the history of that society. . . . It is crucial, therefore, that . . . teachers acquire a critical self-consciousness of the activity they are engaged in and of the framework within which they are functioning. Otherwise they are doomed to a mindless and mechanical repetition of the principles and procedures which governed their own education, and education itself is condemned to a stifling and degenerate conservatism.

To enable future teachers to discover the necessity for and reality of change in schools is a first challenge. This requires a reinvigorated exploration not of the "how to" questions of teacher practice, but of the "why" questions. Only by examining the "why" questions and the complex political arena where goals and values compete can teachers develop a personal response to the question "what are schools for" by which their own actions and school practices can be evaluated. This discovery of what school reform is all about is crucial to teachers' participation in enlarged leadership and professional roles. As such practices as site-based management and outcomes-based education become more prevalent in field experience sites, this challenge to redefine what should concern teachers may become easier.

A second challenge is in helping students to own a sense of ethical responsibility as a defining aspect of teaching, to acknowledge in themselves a powerful sense of calling and altruism. This granted, students willingly explore the meaning of "caring about" children: how the moment-to-moment acts, assumptions, and decisions of individual teachers wittingly or unwittingly serve one or another of the competing goals and constituencies of schooling, not always putting children's welfare first (see Appendix A, "Orienting Questions for the Critical Social Perspective"). From this perspective, students discover Goodlad's (1990a) difficult conclusion that, "The teacher's conduct at all times and in all ways is thus a moral matter."

Finally, when students perceive themselves as individual moral players in an ethical enterprise, and when their caring is mobilized into a will to act, they inevitably experience debilitating frustration unless teacher education acknowledges a third challenge. This is to help them know how to address ethical concerns and what to do about them. Strategies that meet this challenge are less clear. Action research to discover different teachers' thinking and decision-making on contested issues may be one helpful but insufficient approach. Careful analysis of case studies involving school restructuring may unpack predictable group dynamics and identify conflicting group interests to be anticipated (for example, Oakes, 1992). Finally, the almost complete focus on the student-teacher relationship in the traditional teacher role may be enlarged to increase attention to teachers' relationships with other adults -- parents and colleagues in particular.

Restructured schools that better meet our nation's and individual children's needs will require large numbers of teachers who conceive of their work in new ways. A critical social perspective helps teachers assume roles of leadership by revealing how means relate to ends in schools, by acknowledging the power of caring, and by helping teachers discover the difficult but essential work of creative negotiation toward "the schools-to-come."

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Meaning and Learning

by Bernard R. Dansart

In the comic strip 'Calvin and Hobbes' Calvin asks his teacher, "What's the point of human existence"? When the teacher responds by saying that only questions about the day's lesson will be entertained, a dejected Calvin replies, "Frankly, I'd like to have the issue resolved before I expend any more energy on this." Following Calvin's lead it seems appropriate that educators attempt to resolve two issues that will form the substance of this article. The first issue is the nature of the learner, which will be presented as a three-dimensional unity. The second issue is the importance of discovery of meaning, which will be presented as the ultimate goal of learning. These two issues will be examined within the framework of a critical social perspective of teaching.

Human Nature

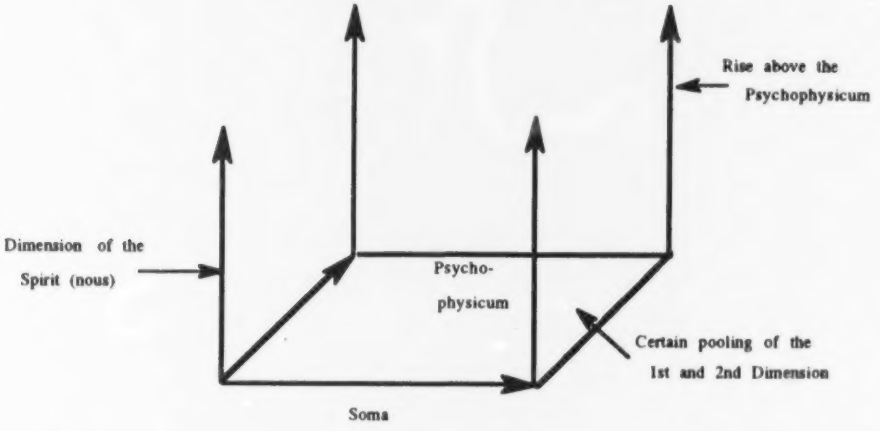
While the nature of human nature is a fundamental question, the answer offered throughout human history has been neither clear, consistent, nor uniformly accepted. Religions of many traditions have supported the concept of body and soul, with the soul regarded as a spiritual entity. On the other hand witness the confusion of the ancient Greeks, who maintained a distinction between slave and free person. They harbored an admiration for the work of artisans while at the same time questioning their human dignity (Finley, 1954). As natural science developed in the past several hundred years and became more empirical and technological in its exploration of the human body, its instruments discovered no evidence of the life giving component, the soul, embraced by philosophy and religion. Therefore science dismissed the spiritual for the most part. Gould (1981) has described how scientists relegated African-Americans and Native American Indians to subspecies of the human race. Referring, among others, to the writings of the reknowned American biologist Louis Agasssiz, Gould writes ,"Racial prejudice may be as old as recorded human history, but its biological justification imposed the additional burden of *intrinsic inferiority* (emphasis added) upon despised groups, and precluded redemption by

conversion or assimilation" (p. 31). Even the founders of our own nation were lacking sufficient conviction to allow them to extend full human rights to women and Blacks. Current controversies over abortion, doctor assisted suicide, and other medical/ethical issues highlight our own society's confusion concerning what it means to be human and the value of human life.

Viktor Frankl (1905-), a Viennese psychiatrist , has developed a clear and comprehensive theory of the nature of human nature which he (1984) maintains has been confirmed by his experiences in four concentration camps during World War II. Briefly, he defines human nature as "unity in spite of multiplicity"(p. 22)* The multiplicity consists of physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions, with each dimension being more inclusive and encompassing than the previous one. The spiritual dimension (used in the sense of capable-of-discovering-meaning, not in a religious sense) in turn is open-ended. It is oriented to discovery of meaning or to another person (love). Unity exists because these dimensions are not conceived of as layers piled one on top of the other nor as entities capable of independent existence. Rather, they exist as a unity, although a unity which cannot be completely understood nor explained. (Frankl, 1969).

A drawing of a cube without a top to it (Figure 1), has been used as an analogy of the physical, psychological, and spiritual bound up in an inseparable unity. Length, width, and height of the cube represent physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions. Each element (length,
width, and height) is essential to the existence of the cube. Take one dimension of the cube away and there is no cube. Take away the physical, psychological, or spiritual dimension of humans and there is no human nature. The absence of a top for the cube is to illustrate the self-transcendent and open nature of human beings who discover meaning in relationship to others and to the world. When teachers keep in mind the importance of relationship and context while teaching they are acting in harmony with the nature of the learner.

Figure 1: Unity in spite of Diversity



Focusing on one of the human dimensions to the exclusion of the others is what Frankl (1984) calls "reductionism". This happens when humans are viewed as "nothing but" a biological organism, or "nothing but" a psychological organism controlled by needs, drives, and emotions. Sometimes we do this to ourselves when we feel overcome by a physical or psychological need. Sometimes teachers do this to their pupils when they become too enamored of or repelled by certain superficial traits. In all instances, Frankl reminds us that we *have* our traits rather than we are our traits. The lesson for teachers here is to always to keep in mind the potential of even unpromising students to respond to their innate nature as discoverers-of-meaning.

Three Pillars of Support

This view of human nature is supported by three pillars or axioms, the first of which is "freedom of will". The freedom posited is a limited freedom which mainly exists in the ability to discover meaning in life, even or especially in the most tragic circumstances. The second pillar is the "will to meaning", the assertion that human beings have an inherent striving for meaning. This striving for meaning lies at the heart of motivation and carries great significance for the classroom. The third pillar, "meaning of life", expresses the conviction that life is unconditionally meaningful. No circumstance is

so tragic nor is any individual so unimportant that the potential for discovery of meaning is impossible. "Within limitations", says Fabry (1987) "we have a say about who we are and who we want to become. We need never let ourselves be reduced to helpless victims"(p. xx).

This third pillar leads us to examine the American emphasis on the importance of success in every aspect of life, including school. Success is regarded as so important that lack of it may almost be considered un-American. On the other hand, Frankl regards meaning as necessary, whereas success is dispensable. People can (and do) live without success; they cannot live without meaning. By way of explanation, Frankl (1969, 1978) notes that success is not under our control in the same way that discovery of meaning is. It would be fair to say that success occurs at the psychological level whereas meaning occurs at the spiritual level. Frankl (1969, 1984) cites anecdotal evidence and research to describe people who had abundant means to live but little or nothing to live for. Newspaper and popular magazine accounts describe the same phenomenon of people with ample means ending their own lives, while people with meagre resources and little opportunity continue to struggle and live satisfying (meaningful) lives.

While meaning and success may be present at the same time, it is also possible to have one without the other. Of the two, it's meaning that is indispensable. Frankl (1984) says that it was meaning that kept him and fellow prisoners alive during the privation and brutality of the concentration camps. A favorite quote of his (Frankl, 1984) taken from Nietzsche is, "He who has a *why* to live can bear with almost any *how*" (p.12).

A teacher's belief about the importance of academic success will be part of the hidden curriculum in the classroom. The teacher who emphasizes success at the expense of discovering personal meaning is shortchanging the student. Not only is the teacher limiting the students' opportunity to develop the kind of deep personal meaning that is also characterized by commitment, in the long run they are limiting opportunity for success. Again, drawing on personal experience to support his theory, Frankl (1984) remarks,

"Don't aim at success-the more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss it...Then you will live to see that in the long run-in the long run, I say!-success will follow you precisely because you had *forgotten* to think of it" (p. 16-17).

Critical Social Implications.

Perhaps the most significant implication of this perspective is the belief that all students deserve respect as human beings regardless of race, gender, class, disability or any other physical or psychological characteristic. The importance of our common humanity dwarfs any differences we may exhibit. Frankl (1984) bases this on his explicit theory of human nature and not on any religious belief system. In this way it can be used by any teacher and not just those with a religious orientation. Difficulties encountered in the classroom such as repugnant physical, psychological, or behavioral traits, or difficulties with learning that individuals or groups of students might manifest may incline teachers to dehumanize students. They may regard them as "nothing but" their disagreeable characteristics (reductionism). Frankl reminds us of their total humanity.

Acceptance of the three-dimensional nature of persons readily leads teachers to examine what dimension(s) of human nature is (are) the proper object of the teacher's efforts. Do they engage in reductionism as they develop course or lesson objectives? Are they inclined to neglect or entirely omit one of the three dimensions? What is the proper emphasis for attempts to educate each of the dimensions? Certainly, the relative emphasis to be placed on development of the physical and psychological dimensions of students does not have universal agreement. The manner in which teachers answer these questions will have serious impact on the content and style of their teaching.

An obvious implication of the three-dimensional model is to *educate for meaning* since discovery of meaning is the distinguishing characteristic of human beings. Certainly the literature is replete with such reminders and exhortations. In their book, *Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain*, Caine and Caine (1991) point out that meaning itself can be discovered at different levels . The most basic level, rote learning,

has a legitimate although limited place in education. The second level, the "a ha" experience or "felt knowledge" of Gestalt learning, occurs at a deeper level. This may be roughly equivalent to the middle stages of cognitive development of Perry's (1981) scheme. However, the third level of personal meaning or "deep meaning", is where the meaning of Frankl and that of learning psychologists *meet*. Personal meaning not only provides significance but carries with it energy and passion, *a commitment to do something*. At this level meaning is an important motivating force and possesses the characteristics of learning at the higher stages of development identified by Perry (1970, 1981). It also has implications for outcomes-based education and assesment as measures of what students are able and willing to *do* with their learning.

Caine and Caine (1991) put special emphasis on the motivational aspect of deep meaning. They quote physicist David Bohm (1987) saying, "only meaning arouses energy"(p. 22). At the same time they remind us of the tendency of educators to avoid deep meaning because it "involves passion and the apparent absence of logic" (p. 98). Is the goal of schooling to produce "talking heads" or individuals who have struggled with meaning and developed a committment to truth as they see it? Frankl (1969) and Perry (1970) are in agreement that we can be "half sure and whole hearted" in both belief and behavior as long as we remain mindful of the tenuous nature of our grasp of truth.

The final critical social implication I wish to address is whether teachers should address values in the classroom. If so, how should they do it? What values, if any, should they teach? Even if teachers avoid values in the classroom they are still implicitly teaching values. Kohn (1991) comments

> "...we must concede that a prosocial agenda is indeed value-laden, but we should immediately add that the very same is true of the status quo. The teacher's presence and behavior, her choice of text, the order in which she presents ideas, and her tone of voice are as much part of the lesson as the curriculum itself. So, too, is a teacher's method of discipline or classroom management saturated in values, regardless of whether those values are transparent to the teacher" (p. 499).

Parents as well as educators will undoubtedly take different positions regarding this issue. Although the situation is a controversial one for teachers and difficult to address, they may find comfort in the fact that a psychiatrist (Frankl), an educator (Perry), and brain research as reported in MacLean (1978), concur that values (meaning) are at the core of learning. Perhaps Perry (1970), using a quote from Michael Polyani's *Personal Knowledge* to describe the highest level of intellectual development, says it best when he calls this kind of learning "...the ultimate welding of epistemological and moral issues in the act of Commitment".

In the model presented by Frankl, the active agent of learning is a three-dimensional unity we call the human person. The dimensions cannot be separated although the intention may be to educate one of them primarily. The learner is redefined as a discoverer-of-meaning. The goal of learning is to promote the development of deep personal meaning that includes a commitment to action. The teacher, in deciding matters of curriculum, text books to use, teaching strategies, methods of discipline, and classroom management best suited to educate this discoverer-of-meaning, is following a critical social approach.

Notes

* Frankl's complete theory is a system of therapy called Logotherapy. Translated literally it means 'healing through meaning'.

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Part Of The Road

by Bonnie von Hoff Johnson

Stewart Brand (1987) stated, "Once a new technology rolls over you, if you're not part of the steamroller, you're part of the road" (p. 9). Historically, teachers have heard various forms of this admonishment. Education personnel "in the know" hopped on technology bandwagons: instructional films, instructional television, slide-tapes. Students welcomed the technologies. They provided a time-out from tedium and a hovering instructor—a time to relax and enjoy the show.

The "old" technologies are rarely seen in today's offices, airline check-in counters, or fast-food restaurants. Computers and computer-related technologies, however, are ubiquitous. In 1987, Brand suggested that computers are "about to disappear from view the way motors did" (p. 254), and "nobody (except nanotechnologists) speculates now about what motors will become or worries much about what they are doing to human dignity" (p. 255).

Why are our schools not keeping pace with "real-world" computer use? The fear of small, menacing machines replacing teachers has been nearly eradicated. Yet why did the U.S. Office of Technology find that, "For 11th grade computer users,... computers seldom show up in academic subjects, and where they are used the purpose is often to teach about computers"? (Cuban, 1992, p. 36)

Renaissance or Back to the Dark Ages?

The introduction of computers for education held great hope and promise. Seymour Papert began developing LOGO, a computer language for children, in 1968. LOGO allows students to control a computer and provides metacognitive experiences for the user. After working for more than ten years with LOGO, Papert (1980) wrote, "We are at a point in the history of education when radical change is possible, and the possibility for that change is directly tied to the impact of the computer " (pp. 36 & 37). With individual

ownership of computers, Papert suggested, "There might be a renaissance of thinking about education" (p. 37).

The renaissance has not dawned. Indeed, for some students in our country, the plagues of poverty and an "I've got mine" societal attitude have relegated these future citizens to conditions reminiscent of past centuries: rotting teeth, disease, raw sewage outside one's home (Kozol, 1991).

There is a feeling of presumptuousness when one talks about the integration of technology in our schools. In Jonathan Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* (1991), teachers in poor school districts (i.e., East St. Louis, Illinois; New York; San Antonio; Chicago; Washington, D.C.; Camden, New Jersey) describe conditions in their schools: " 'no VCRs' " (p. 29); " 'AV equipment...so old that we are pressured not to use it' " (p. 29); "'four computers in the school, which holds almost 600 children' " (p. 231). Kozol spoke with an instructor who teaches typing. When he asked about using computers, the teacher related what she tells her students: " 'We cannot afford to give you a computer. If you learn on these typewriters, you will find it easier to move on to computers if you ever have one.' " (p. 139).

Kozol also writes about wealthy school districts, some not geographically distant from the poor districts. In the privileged realms, Kozol noted "up-to-date technology" (p. 65), elective courses that include computer languages (p. 66), and "comfortable computer areas equipped with some 200 IBMs, as well as a hookup to Dow Jones to study stock transactions" (p. 158).

The appalling disparity in the availability of technology in school districts, we tell ourselves, is due to unequal property tax bases. People get what they pay for, we say. Common sense dictates that in the future with the graying of America, all of us will pay dearly for the heartbreaking, unjust plight of so many children.

If we did not know our country better, we might think that the shameful differences in our schools were due to some sinister plan devised by "business studs" (Brand, 1987,

pp. 5, 8) to provide workers for the "somebody's got to do it" jobs. Kozol (1991) visited a school in which students in an *advanced* home economics class were given job training for positions in fast-food restaurants (p. 27). One only could imagine the brouhaha that would result if such a course were offered in the wealthy suburban schools which Kozol visited (p. 76).

A Chicago businessperson told Kozol, " 'No one expects these ghetto kids to go to college. Most of them are lucky if they're even literate.' " (p. 76). How many students go to school with similar prophecies from strangers in the back of their minds?

Intelligence and creativity are not meted out according to social class. Ken Kesey said, "You can count how many seeds are in the apple, but not how many apples are in the seed." Yet, how can materially poor students hope to compete with those who have technology in their homes and schools and possess the concomitant prior knowledge?

In 1985, Seymour Papert and the MIT Media Lab put a chunk of their monetary allocation into Hennigan School, an inner-city Boston elementary school. Brand (1987) reported, "One of the reasons the school was selected was because of its racial makeup: 40 percent black, 40 percent Hispanic, 18 percent white, 2 percent Asian. Many of the kids are from single-parent, illiterate homes" (p. 120). At Hennigan, each student had access to a computer. Five months into Papert's project, students were using LOGO, composing music, engaging in cooperative learning, and participating in a myriad of other activities that the aforementioned Chicago businessperson should have witnessed. Nicholas Negroponte, director of the MIT Media Lab said, "'You can take any six-year-old from anywhere in the world...and plunk them down in Paris to live for a year, and they'll learn French—whether they have a propensity for language or not, whether they even consider themselves capable of learning a language'" (Brand, 1987, p. 120). The price tag for Hennigan, "School of the Future," was $1.5 million a year (Brand, p. 119). The tab was picked up by MIT, private foundations, businesses, and federal agencies.

Voices from America's Heartland

Seemingly far away from the inner cities of Boston, New York, and Washington, D.C., what is happening in America's Heartland—more specifically the State of Iowa? In the Spring of 1991, a statewide survey was conducted to assess the use of computers and their related technologies by K-12 teachers throughout the State of Iowa. The study was sponsored by the Iowa Department of Education and the College of Education at Iowa State University in Ames. The survey addressed the accessibility of computers and computer-related technologies, instructional uses of the technologies, availability and appropriateness of technology-related staff inservice and development, and teachers' attitudes toward the technologies. From a pool of 3,001 K-12 teachers, 64% or 1,934 teachers participated in the survey.

Schmidt and Thompson (1991) reported that although 97.6% of the respondents had access to computers in their schools, the Apple II series of computers comprised the majority of available hardware. Technologies such as CD ROMs and videodisc players were not available to most of the teachers (p. 2). These results are not surprising. School districts apparently do not have the funds to repeatedly invest in the new technologies—even though the technologies in place might limit teaching and learning.

Data from the survey indicated that Iowa teachers have "more interest than proficiency in using computer-based instructional applications" (Schmidt & Thompson, p. 3). The use of computers for problem solving took a backseat to the more familiar uses such as word processing, games, and drill and practice. Due to lack of requisite technology, the majority of Iowa teachers said they had no interest in telecommunications (p. 3). This is unfortunate; the relative homogeneity of the population suggests that students could benefit from this use of technology. To expand their instructional uses of computers and computer-related technologies, respondents noted that they needed more computers, more peripherals, and more time to learn and use these technologies (p. 4).

Although districts have provided inservices and staff development for the majority of teachers, the majority felt that such services did not meet their needs. The respondents had a positive attitude toward computers and computer-related technologies, yet they expressed a lack of confidence in using the technologies.

Voices from the Heartland tell us that except for the initial investment in hardware and a more positive teacher attitude toward computers, not much has changed since their introduction into classrooms more than ten years ago. Students are still drilling and practicing, word processing, and teachers lack the time and feel inadequate in using less familiar computer applications and newer technologies. As Cuban (1992) so aptly said, "The overall picture after the introduction of the personal computer a decade ago can be summed up in a one-line caption: Computers meet classroom; classroom wins" (p. 36).

Perpetuation of the *Status Quo*

Papert (1980) stated, "Conservatism in the world of education has become a self-perpetuating *social* phenomenon" (p. 37). Educators must ask themselves if this conservatism is at least partially responsible for the schools' lagging behind business and industry in the use of technology.

For a change, the classroom teacher will not be blamed for the lag. This time, administrators and professors of education will be called on the carpet. In the Spring of 1992, results were compiled from a survey given to employers of recent graduates of the Tri-College Cooperative Effort in Dubuque, Iowa. Although the survey did not mention technology per se, the responses give insights into how much school administrators value the role of technology.

There were 62 recent graduates from the Tri-Colleges who had been teaching for six months through three years. All areas, from early childhood through secondary school, were represented. The first question on the survey was, "What is your professional judgment of the strengths of the graduate? Of the 59 employer responses, not a single employer mentioned the use of technology. Of the 58 comments about the new employees'

pedagogical knowledge, none included technology. Employers wrote 59 comments about the recent graduates' teaching techniques; none included the use of technology. There were 59 comments about the critical social perspective of teaching; none mentioned the inclusion of technology. Employers were asked for recommendations on how to improve the preparation of beginning teachers. Of the 54 responses, 3 were related to technology, to wit: "computer skills to write IEPs" (word processing), "new computer materials," and "technology as an effective tool/resource."

Results from this survey imply that the perpetuation of the staus quo isn't about to be disturbed by some administrators. It's strictly business as usual; no technology revolution here. In a society where we deal with technology everywhere we turn, it is remarkable that of 289 responses, only three referred to technology.

Certainly if a recent Tri-College graduate were consistently using technology in the classroom, an administrator would have noticed. So the finger of blame must be pointed at that bastion of fuddy duddies—professors of education. How many teacher trainers use technology in their classrooms? Perhaps an occasional overhead projector is spotted; VCRs seem to be popular. Yet, how many computers are in use? LOGO can be run on an Apple.

No one is in a better position to change what goes on in elementary and secondary classrooms than is a professor of education. Each student in an undergraduate class will teach many students every year. Professors can not only set examples for their students, they also can require them to use technology in their lessons and projects. If faculty lack adequate training, surely computer personnel are available to help. It is hypocritical to harp about "behind-the-times" classroom teachers without examining one's own notes yellowed by time.

The preparation of teachers must include sessions on the inequalities in America's schools. Students must be aware of conditions such as those described in Kozol's book. To ignore these injustices is to perpetuate not only conservatism but naivete and neglect.

Finally, professors of education should examine with their students the stereotypes of classroom teachers: males often are portrayed as skinny, bespectacled wimps; females as crabby, overweight biddies. Neither is a mover nor a shaker. Are these stereotypes warranted? Will beginning teachers perpetuate them? Perhaps in breaking down the stereotypes, education students will be spurred to take action when they begin their careers. Where they see a need, an inequality, they will address it, publicize it, and if necessary do some well-placed begging to make things right.

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Conclusion:

Working with Colleagues in the Development of a Critical Social Perspective: A Department Chair's Experience

by Michael Vavrus

> "If reflective teaching is a goal to which teacher education programs subscribe, this goal must be explicitly structured into programs and evaluated, and faculty must discuss the content, processes, and attitudes of reflection they regard as important" (Valli, 1992, p. 216).

The systematic inclusion of a critical social perspective into course syllabi outcomes and content was the result of three years of faculty collaboration to articulate more clearly the purposes and processes of the teacher education curriculum of the Tri-College Cooperative Effort. The conceptualization of teachers controlling their own labor was initially accepted by most faculty as a remote ideal. Some faculty believed that beginning teachers should realistically be understood simply as implementers of instruction rather than as curriculum developers. The operating mythology by faculty was that once teachers were out in the field for a few years, they would eventually evolve to professionals with control over curricular decisions affecting their students.[1] Generally faculty felt that there was no practical alternative to the norm of preparing prospective teachers to adapt to *status quo* schooling conditions rather than developing programs where educators acquire a professional knowledge base necessary for challenging prevailing conventional practices.

Faculty also believed that one purpose of a liberal arts education is to promote the quality of inquiry. None disagreed with the notion that critical thinking was an important capacity for our graduates to have. However, faculty understandings of critical thinking were generally limited to cognitive tasks such as higher-order learning within classical subject matter domains, but not toward social critique and actions.

In an early draft of their curriculum model the faculty did adopt an undefined component called a "Critical Social and Psychological Perspective." Because faculty were working with differing understandings of the concept, they were unable to show how it was incorporated into their courses and programs beyond mere assertion. Thus, after two

years the faculty had failed to express adequately this concept to themselves or their students. An external advisory committee to the department patiently served as a sounding board to our model-building efforts, but they, too, were not convinced of the importance of a critical social perspective.

As chair of the Education department for the consortium I had to abandon the procedure of using the committee of the whole to determine meaningful articulation. A committee originally charged with model development had mainly focused on structural rather than conceptual issues. The expectation that this committee would bring a useful document back to the entire faculty to consider was never realized -- leaving the faculty with little direction.

Another model committee was created during our third year of this process. Now the atmosphere had shifted to one where, as one faculty member put it, "nothing is self-evident." The burden was on us to seek a deeper understanding and articulation of our curricular goals and delivery.

During this intellectually productive but somewhat frustrating period the faculty faced the need to have operational definitions for the conceptualization of our curriculum model. Whereas the curriculum elements of pedagogical knowledge and teaching technique were more easily defined, the struggle to state a clear meaning of a critical social perspective to ourselves and our external audiences was difficult. Again, the problem in part may be attributed to the norm of teacher education scholarship and practice which omits critical reflection in favor of a "strong adherence to prescribed skill development (technical rationality) in the preservice years" (Valli, 1992, p. 215).

Faculty meetings came to focus on the definitional task exclusively. Various subgroups worked on definitions and orienting questions for the terminology we were wanting to utilize. A number of *ad hoc* small group and special departmental meetings were conducted while other departmental issues had to be put on hold. The intensity of our

work plus a tight time-line to bring this matter to closure contributed to the heightening of stress among the faculty.

The faculty agreed that a social perspective was needed, but tended to be unfamiliar with implications of an applied critical dimension. Many thought that knowledge of the social context of schooling was synonymous with critical reflection. However, it was noted during our discussions that a teacher may, for example, have an understanding of the socio-economic background of his or her students yet take an anti-critical, reactionary stance by blaming pupil failure or success on family background. As a faculty we collectively attempted to counter this tendency by stating within our critical perspective the following: "Reflective teachers thoughtfully question *status quo* arrangements and consider alternative visions and actions."

An important watershed for faculty further internalizing the conceptualization of a critical social perspective turned out to be faculty self-evaluation of their courses in light of the model elements (see Appendix for copy of self-evaluation). As chair I initiated this process as a means to evaluate our curriculum. Initially this action was resisted by a substantial number of faculty. Their objections centered on the original use of the term "weaknesses" in the self-evaluation instrument for qualitatively describing how their courses might deviate from the model elements, especially the critical social perspective. Finally, we altered the evaluation form from a statement of weakness to the following: "What difficulties, if any, do you encounter when you attempt to infuse the department's model into [course]?"

Some faculty also argued that the focus of their courses was not intended to include a critical social perspective. Infusing this latter orientation into traditional pedagogical knowledge and teaching techniques was a foreign idea for many. Since many teacher educators and practitioners nationally tend to hold to technical conceptions of teaching and learning, it probably should not have been surprising to find some of my own faculty

resisting the restructuring of the curriculum to include critical inquiry within a socio-political context.

The self-evaluation form was eventually revised so that faculty could examine "the degree (e.g., minor or major)" to which their respective courses addressed the critical social perspective. Even though this was a self-evaluation process, some faculty thought that I as the chair would be evaluating their evaluations. The fact that the self-evaluations were a means to understand better our own teaching and courses was overshadowed for some by what I perceived as a fear of personal criticism. In one extreme instance a faculty member rebuffed the entire process in the name of "academic freedom," perverting the phrase to mean that he did not feel he could be required to be accountable to the department and teacher education students in terms of our new curriculum model, Teacher as Reflective Decision Maker, and its associated elements.

After the course self-evaluations were completed, faculty revised their syllabi for congruency with the model. As chair I had to review all professional education syllabi for thoroughness and clarity in addressing our model elements. I also had to pay close attention to reports developed by program areas as faculty committees articulated individual program purposes and processes based on our the department's model. Previously, I had left much of the syllabi development and program reporting to faculty as a recognition of their autonomy. Based our previous inability to express ourselves appropriately about the nature of our curriculum, I had to assume a more directive and evaluative role regarding the adequacy of course syllabi and program curriculum reports.

The overall outcome of our work has been that as a faculty we are now presenting our curriculum to our students and external groups more cohesively. Both our *Teacher Education Handbook* and *Student Teaching Handbook* articulate the role of a critical social perspective for an education student developing into a reflective teacher. All professional education syllabi now indicate how and where the critical social perspective is addressed within courses. We are learning that a critical social perspective has different

interpretations and narratives given the curricular context in which it is considered. Rather than a monolithic concept, its meaning and implications may vary significantly from, for example, an elementary education methodology course in reading to a foundations course in multicultural/nonsexist education.

While an analysis of faculty self-evaluations of their courses reveals that some faculty still fall short of infusing the critical dimension of the critical social perspective, we have moved our curriculum beyond the norm of traditional teacher education. For example, the consortium's elementary education program is adding "questions to clinical assignments which would cause a greater reflectivity on the relationship of management techniques to the critical social perspective (such as social norms, outside influences on classrooms and legitimate uses of authority and power)."[2] The early childhood program has seen the need to move toward "reflective rather than descriptive journal writing" for preservice field experiences. A faculty committee for the department's core curriculum has called attention to the need "to facilitate a more appropriate matching of student teachers with cooperating teachers for developing the ability of student teachers to become reflective decision makers." Realizing the value of reflection, the department's secondary education committee observes that during student teaching "the reflective student teacher improves! The non-reflective student teacher tries to survive."

In a review of case studies reporting the design of reflective teacher preparation programs, Zeichner (1992) observes an absence in the expression of a social reconstructionist orientation -- a concept I interpret as similar to what we are calling a critical social perspective. Our early experiences thus far suggest that to alter a teacher education program's direction to include a systematic examination and infusion of a critical social perspective requires extensive collegial interaction and self-study on the needs of today's children and youth by all involved in professional education.

Notes

[1] For a more in-depth discussion and analysis of the *lack* of teacher control over his or her work, the reader is referred to my earlier investigations of this topic (see Vavrus, 1979; 1987; 1989).

[2] Direct statements in this paragraph are taken from faculty-articulated program reports, Fall 1992.

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Appendix A, Orienting Questions for the Critical Social Perspective

The Critical Social Perspective element is operationalized by faculty through the following series of orienting questions which teacher education students are expected to see the value of and regularly use as guidance in the reflective decision-making process:

- What are the goals of schooling that are assumed and underlie my decisions and sense of what is problematic?
- How may my decision affect students' progress toward legitimate intellectual, political, economic, social or personal developmental goals? Do I consider that positive consequences in one might entail negative and unintended consequences in another?
- To what extent is the issue upon which I am deciding defined, created, or driven by economic, social, or political interests outside the classroom and school? Am I clear in reconciling these with students' own best interests?
- To what extent is the issue a consequence of the school's organizational structure (e.g., bureaucracy, ability grouping, age-grading) as a form of social organization? By this decision do I make social or individual values primary?
- What law, administrative policy, or written ethical codes are relevant to my decisions?
- In what ways may do my decision teach or model a "hidden curriculum?" Is the implicit or hidden curriculum congruent with overt curriculum and the public goals of my school?
- To what extent may/should I make decisions or include others? Who would I include?
- To what extent is my approach to decision making shaped by unreflective habit or school "traditions" that have become unexamined or arbitrary "norms?"
- To what degree do I value decisions as reproducing/maintaining *or* as transforming of the *status quo*?
- How might the way I approach decision making affect relations between the school and family?
- Have I checked the validity of my understanding of a situation by imagining it from differing/conflicting points of view? Does an issue or decision appear different (or disappear) when framed from other cultural, social class, ethnic, gender, religious, or developmental perspectives?
- If a decision I make involves compelling others in any way, by what means do I legitimate my authority and use of power? Am I comfortable modelling this to those now less powerful who someday might be more powerful? Will my exercise of power result in the empowering or disempowering of others?
- To what extent do my decisions serve those in my care equally and fairly?
- Does my concern for demonstrable results and quantifiable accountability distort how I frame issues and make decisions?
- Will my decision making foster reflective decision making in others?
- If all teachers approached decision making as I do, what might be the effect on the development of learners as active citizens in a democracy?
- To what extent does my decision making offer me an opportunity to reflect again on my own values and assess what kind of a person -- through my decision making -- I am and may become?

Appendix B: Faculty Self-Evaluation of Courses Form

Faculty Evaluation of
«COURSE #», «course»

1. Briefly describe with examples the degree (e.g., minor or major) to which «COURSE #», «course», attends to the following elements of the Education Department's curriculum model "Teacher as Reflective Decision Maker"
(defined: The application of "reflection-in-action" in which the practitioner is capable of making decisions to reshape what he or she is doing):

   a. Critical Social Perspective
   (defined: A Critical Social Perspective takes into consideration the interaction between the school and the socio-political environment in which it exists. This perspective requires a critical approach to looking at the existing environment. Reflective teachers thoughtfully question *status quo* arrangements and consider alternative visions and actions. Reflective teachers affirm as essential an awareness of a Critical Social Perspective on all professional decision making.)

   b. Pedagogical Knowledge
   (defined: Pedagogical Knowledge pertains to knowledge of learning theory, teaching strategies, and evaluation methodologies integrated with a foundation in subject matter knowledge. Pedagogical Knowledge is the research-based information which informs, expands, and modifies reflective decision making for teachers.)

(continued on next page)

Faculty Evaluation of
«COURSE #», «course»
(continued from previous page)

c. Teaching Techniques
(defined: Teaching Technique is the application of pedagogical knowledge by practitioners in order to learn, develop, and practice specific teaching skills. Teaching Technique is focused on the most effective and efficient means for implementing an instructional goal.)

2. What difficulties, if any, do you encounter when you attempt to infuse the department's model in «course»?

3. Could you see «course» potentially making an increased contribution to the department's model "Teacher as Reflective Decision Maker"? If yes, briefly describe.